



MODERN INTERIORS
lithographs & confessions
STEPHEN GOSNELL

For your Wife + Kid
Sincerely
Stephen

MODERN INTERIORS:

lithographs & confessions

STEPHEN
GOSNELL

 BKMK Press

 UMKC

This book is dedicated to Nelda, who is dead and therefore (presumably) tolerant of my crude attempts to turn her memory into Art . . . and to all my friends who have been either depicted or talked about in these pages and whose live tolerance will be tested by their publication . . . and, of course, to Lulu, who seems to be my next assignment.

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A BRIEF IMAGINARY INTERVIEW

- Q. What are you trying to do?
A. To make all the madness hold still long enough to draw its face.
- Q. Judging from these prints it would seem to have a lot of different faces.
A. That's not a question. Resist the impulse to interject your own assumptions.
- Q. Why is what you're doing an important thing to do?
A. I agree with Mr. Pater that Art is "life filtered through a temperament," but the question whether that sort of self-indulgent activity is "important" is beyond me. I could of course assert that it (Art) is not as important as raising a child or that it is more important than playing with money-market certificates, but I couldn't prove either assertion . . . and in the most objective chambers of my mind I wouldn't really believe them.
- Q. You seem to be implying that Art may be of no ultimate consequence, and yet you continue to try (if, indeed, these things are Art) to make it. How can you continue working with such a negative attitude?
A. Habit is a powerful aphrodisiac, and nowhere did I mean to imply that I do not love what I habitually practice. And I don't consider myself negative. Only candid. I will maintain, however, that though Art may not be an "important" endeavor, it is an essentially ennobling one.
- Q. Can you prove that?
A. No. It is an act of faith. The only one of which I am presently capable.
- Q. Why do all these lithographs depict people in interiors?
A. Because there's a lot of funny things going on indoors these days.
- Q. Do you mean "funny strange" or "funny droll"?
A. You can't have one without the other.
- Q. Why all this concern with the bizarre and inexplicable?
A. Since earliest youth I have had a prodigious capacity for wonder at the grand absurdities of human interaction. I have not yet lost it, but it has bred a certain cynicism and stoicism in my character. It's not my fault really. I will accept no culpability for the invention of the H-Bomb, the artificial heart, the electric toothbrush or the Balloon Payment Plan, and it seems to me incredible that any rational human *could* have been responsible for any of these marvels. But there they are. Grinning at us. I have opted to grin back.
- Q. Do you have any hope for Humanity at all? Can things be fixed? Or is it the artist's responsibility to try to fix things rather than just "filter" apparent realities?
A. Good artists are usually too intelligent to believe that things can be "fixed," and one should not confuse Moral Outrage (or in my case, Quizzical Amusement) with an intention to Reform. They are often mutually exclusive.
- Q. Why can't things be fixed?

- A. A little story. My daughter has a friend who was once thrown in jail. When he asked the other prisoners why they were there, he got two standard responses: 1. *I didn't do nuthin'*. and 2. *Lack of Child Support*. Those seemed to be the only two reasons people end up in jail. My daughter maintains, however, that if she ever ends up in a similar predicament her answer will be different. It's the standard response she always gives to me when I want to know why she's done something stupid. She just curls her lip and says, "Lack of self-control, Dad."

That's it, folks. *Lack of self-control*. The excuse that breaks all rocks.

S.G.

Kansas City 1983

BEETHOVEN'S DOG — 1979

I have a picture of my wife and me sitting on a bed in 1963. It is an interesting picture, I think, because I have on a suit and my wife's knees and ankles are clasped tightly together. We are surrounded by her Aunt Charlotte's orderly and pathetic furniture. Our clothes are dated but our expressions are eternal. My wife is alert and confident. I am sullen. The only thing that the picture lacks is a dog. I think that all pictures should contain at least one dog. I know that I have been guilty of not consistently conforming to this maxim in my own work, but that's just a measure of the extent to which any artist's convictions are compromised by exigency. There isn't always room.

Once, having left plenty of room, I went to the library to find a picture of a dog to draw from. It was an academic library so I didn't expect to find many books on dogs. For reasons unknown to me, dog pictures have yet to become a subject of general academic inquiry. There was only one book with pictures of dogs, and I don't know why it was there at all. It was: *How to Raise and Train a Schipperke* by Mrs. Darwin J. Martin. It was exactly what I needed.

Mrs. Martin believed that you should never allow your dog to sit on the furniture, "even as a puppy". One picture shows a sullen dog cowering on a bed in 1963, while Mrs. Martin's alert right arm thrusts from the picture's left margin, her confident index finger pointing inexorably downward.



Bethoven's Dog

Gould 1979

GIRLS CAN'T HELP IT — 1979

The Schipperke breed was developed for guard dog duty on barges in Flanders, and it is small, ugly, evil-tempered and noisy—which, when you think about it, constitutes a pretty metaphor for the Artist's proper relationship to Society, with regard to his stature, appearance, demeanor and audibility.

My wife was short, plump, good natured and could never have been an artist. She was very beautiful when she was young, and was voted *Dream Girl Runner-Up* in 1960 by Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity. They gave her a trophy and I still have it. She always professed to being embarrassed by that sort of attention, and when they cut off her breast and made her hair fall out, she said that in one way she was glad of the changes because now people would have to respond to her on the basis of what she was, not what she looked like. Oh well, I thought, girls can't help it. Later I realized that this could mean either of two things: *girls should not be held responsible* or *girls are not the solution*. Or both.

Some months ago I found all of her hair in a dresser drawer. She had evidently collected it very carefully as it fell out and put it in a plastic bag for safekeeping.



Girls Can't Help It

Jonell 1979

FAMILY MIRROR — 1979

My wife did not want our son to play with guns, but for some reason she did not object to rockets. So a portion of my life was consumed watching parachuted ballistic missile remains settling toward trees or traffic. The following Christmas I bought my son a BB gun and he used it to knock down plastic soldiers in the backyard. One at a time. I considered this a major de-escalation of hostilities, and my wife seemed to be resigned to the fact that the pre-adolescent male obsession with projectiles—especially the sort that wreak some damage on impact — must be allowed an expression.

One of the Phillipino kids from down the street used the BB gun to break my neighbor's window and kill a pair of cardinals, and I was not home when the police came. My wife was, and she was both sick and busy at the time. I am sorry that I wasn't there to handle the problem for her, but despite her outrage, she must have learned an important lesson from the confrontation. I know this because she did not allow the police to confiscate the BB gun. I wanted to know why, and she told me that I would have just gone out and bought another one. Because I loved her I decided to build her an aquarium so she could watch placid gouramis swim redundant circles until something invisible made them die.



Family Mirror

Jonell 1980

MAJOR NETWORKS HELD UP TO RETICULE — 1980

It turned out that what my wife most desired was not an aquarium. It was a filing cabinet. I got her one on sale at Montgomery Ward. It only took her about three months to fill it up, and then, as far as I can tell, she never took anything out of it again.

I used to think that my wife's main trouble was that she didn't understand how quickly things become useless. But now I realize that the uselessness of accumulated things somehow comforted her. The week after she died I threw away everything in her filing cabinet. It consisted mostly of old lesson plans, student papers, teachers' magazines, photocopied articles and the like. Things that she would have never looked at again.

I like to throw away everything as soon as possible, and I suppose I should have thrown away the filing cabinet too, but I didn't because, even though it had been on sale, it had not been cheap. I couldn't stand seeing it in the bedroom so I took it down to the basement. The only things in it now are a couple of old baseball gloves, and I only put them in there because I found living with an expensive nest of emptiness somehow menacing.



Major Networks Held Up to Reticule

Gault 1981

RANCHO DE LA MANCHA — 1981

There's a great deal left in the Universe to measure. If you ever get dejected, that's a thought that might cheer you.

You can measure it using any incremental system you wish — ounces, kilometers, British Thermal Units, board feet, wave lengths, footpounds, teaspoons — it makes little difference since there are tables which show you how to convert any one unit into any other. This passion for measuring things seems to be born of the two fiercest and most irresistible forces in Nature: Human Fear and Human Boredom.

My wife, when fully grown, measured one hundred and fifty-two and one half centimeters in height, though it was listed on her driver's license in feet and inches. When the cancer began to dissolve her spine she became discernibly shorter, and this was not, as you might expect, the result of a tendency to stoop, because except while bathing she wore a brace — much like a long corset with steel reinforcements. Had she lived long enough to have her driver's license renewed, it would have been necessary to remeasure her, and I would now be able to tell you the exact decrease in her stature to the nearest millimeter. I would, of course, have measured her while she was wearing her brace — which, by the way, had to be made to order and cost more than two filing cabinets.



Rancho de la Mancha

Granell 1981

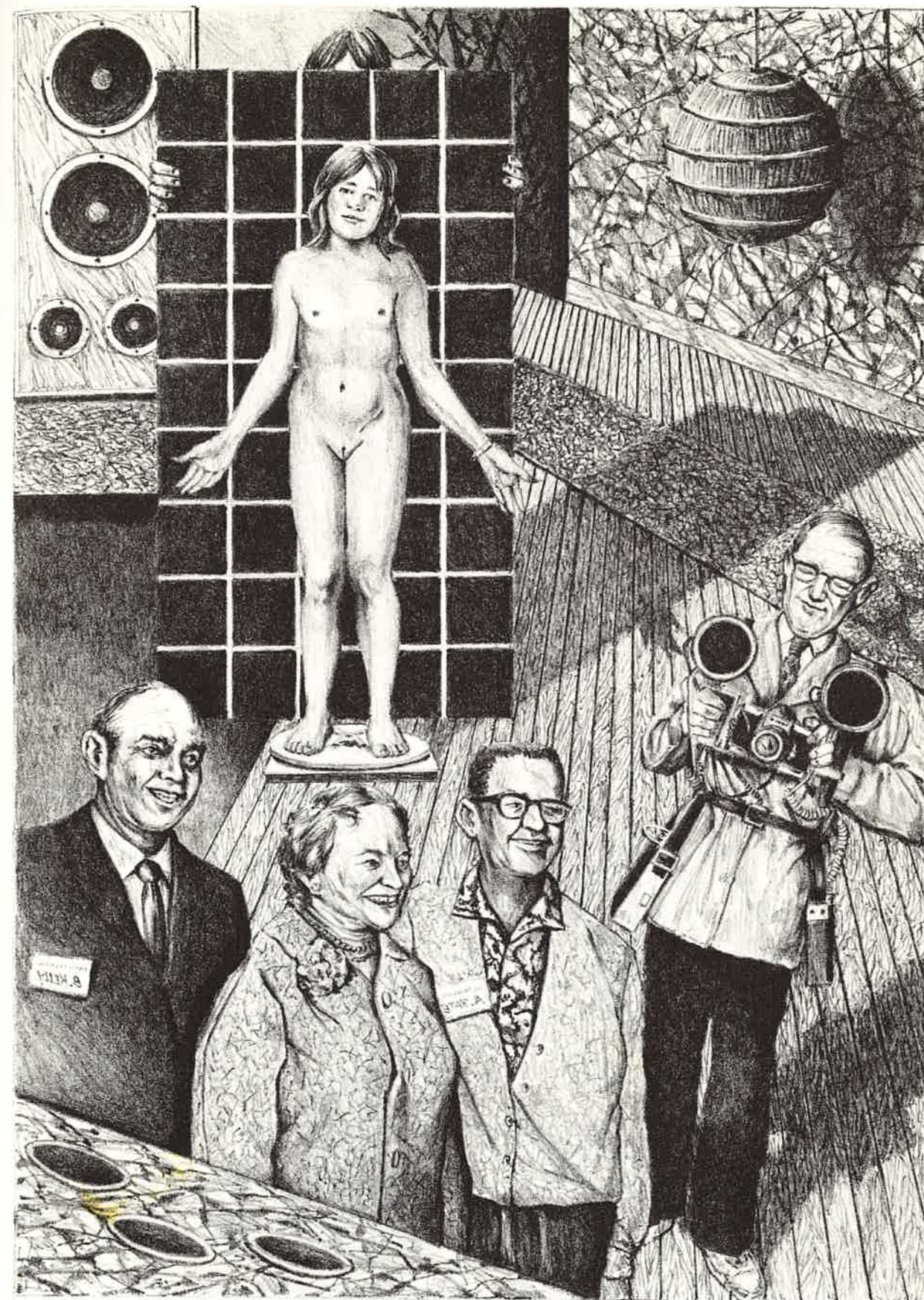
ASTONISHING APOLOGIES I — 1982

My daughter turned out to be very short. But that did not keep her from getting pregnant. When I came back from Colorado my wife told me.

Well, I said, you'll have to take care of it. And she probably would have except that the cancer was in her back and she couldn't do too much. We had to go to the clinic so the resident could practice having a family conference with us before he would arrange an abortion. He had red hair and was very earnest, and he talked with us at great length, and I think it was not very good practice for him because I don't think many families would say the things we did or react to things in the same way. I think we were charged by the minute for this service.

When her kidneys began to fail, my wife had pleasant hallucinations. It was because of chemical imbalance. She knew she wanted something but couldn't think of what. I kept asking her what. Finally she said she wanted some shorts. I was somewhat surprised, being as she was in bed unable to walk, wearing a steel brace. What was she going to do with some shorts? I wanted to know. Oh, I don't want them to wear, she said, I just want them to take with me.

I didn't have to get her any shorts because it wasn't long before she was thinking about wanting something else.



Astonishing Apologies I

April 1982

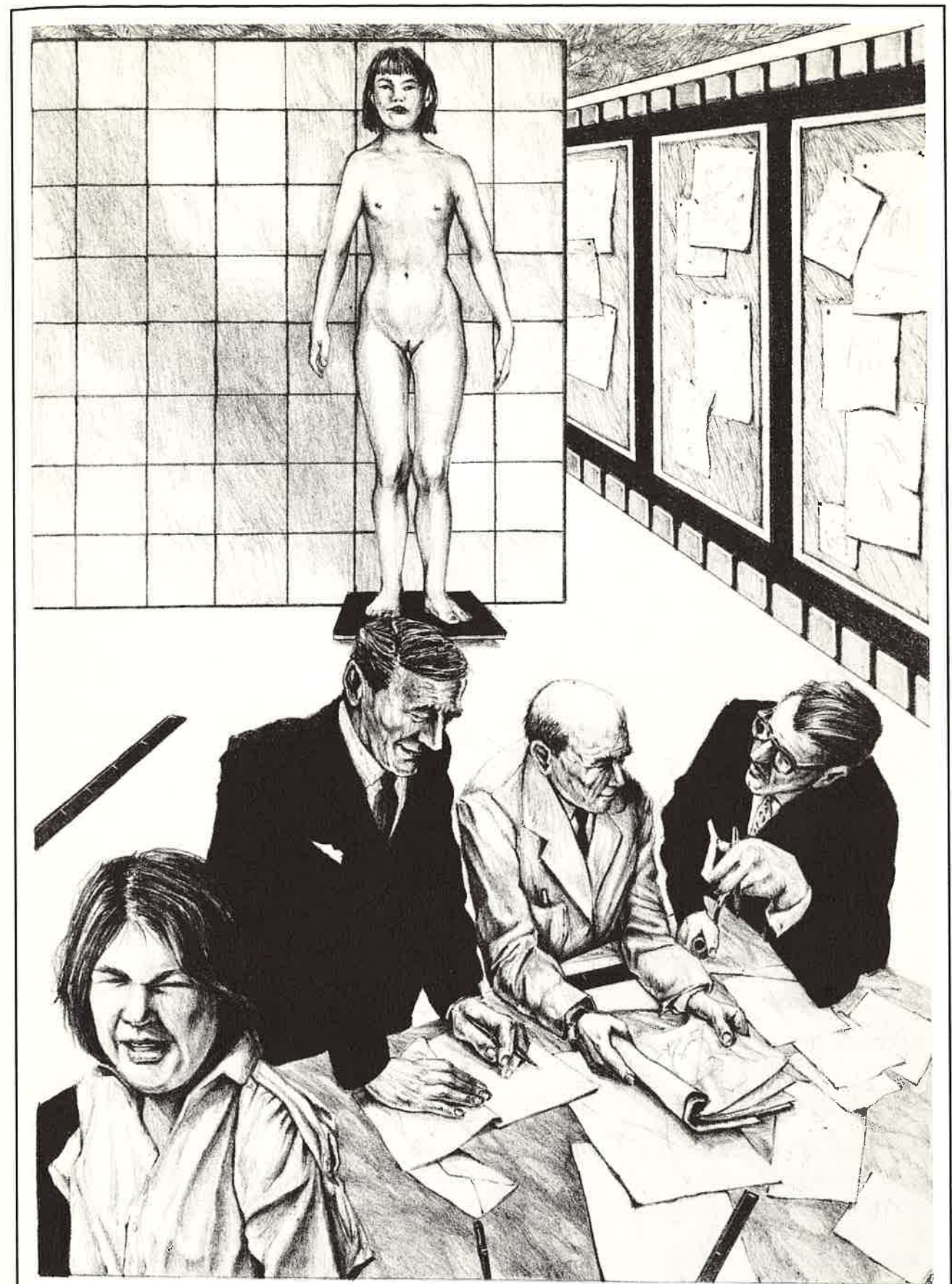
ASTONISHING APOLOGIES II — 1982

My daughter turned out to be very beautiful. But that did not keep her from getting gonorrhea. When my wife came back from her operation I told her.

Well, she said, you're going to have to do something about it. And I would have too, if it hadn't involved making phone calls. My daughter made the phone calls, and we had to go to the clinic so the nurse could practice asking questions relating to the Pandemic Spread of Socialized Disease. Her name was Faith, and she was a Phillipino, and I don't think we were very good practice for her because I don't think many girls are as chaste and cooperative as my daughter and I suspect that few of them contract their diseases from extra-terrestrial sources. I think we were charged by the question for this service.

When her liver began to fail, my wife had interesting hallucinations. It was because of ethical relativism. She wanted to know if I remembered Mike who lived across the street. No one named Mike had ever lived across the street and I said so. You remember him, she said, he lived across the street and watch out because he's gonna get you. I wanted to know why, and her reply was, he's gonna get you for the little birds.

Mike never bothered to get me because, (I presume), my wife went on to meditate on other unrelated moral judgments.



Astonishing Apologies II

Gandell 1982

FOUND OBJECT — 1982-84

It's important to keep floors clean. I'm not sure that I believe in gravity, but I do know that floors exert a strong attraction on objects that belong in higher strata. I once knelt on the living room floor to retrieve an object that belonged in a higher stratum, and as I did so I heard a strange noise and felt an unfamiliar sensation. When I arose I found that I had four inches of green thread attached to my knee, and I assumed that this thread was also attached to a needle which had taken up residence somewhere beyond my patella.

You did this to me, I said to my daughter, but she maintained that she hadn't ever in her whole life had occasion to use green thread. You did this to me, I said to my wife, but she took this simple declaration to include a moral judgment and changed the subject to doctors.

It took two doctors and four x-rays to effect the needle's eviction. One would have thought it possible to find the needle by simply following the thread, but the doctors broke it early on in their ministrations so they could cheerfully consign the search to High Technology.

There's reason to believe that my son did it to me, and in any case when I now find needles in the rug, I experience an emotion which is difficult to classify, but it certainly contains elements of wonder and resignation.



Found Object

Goonell 1982-4

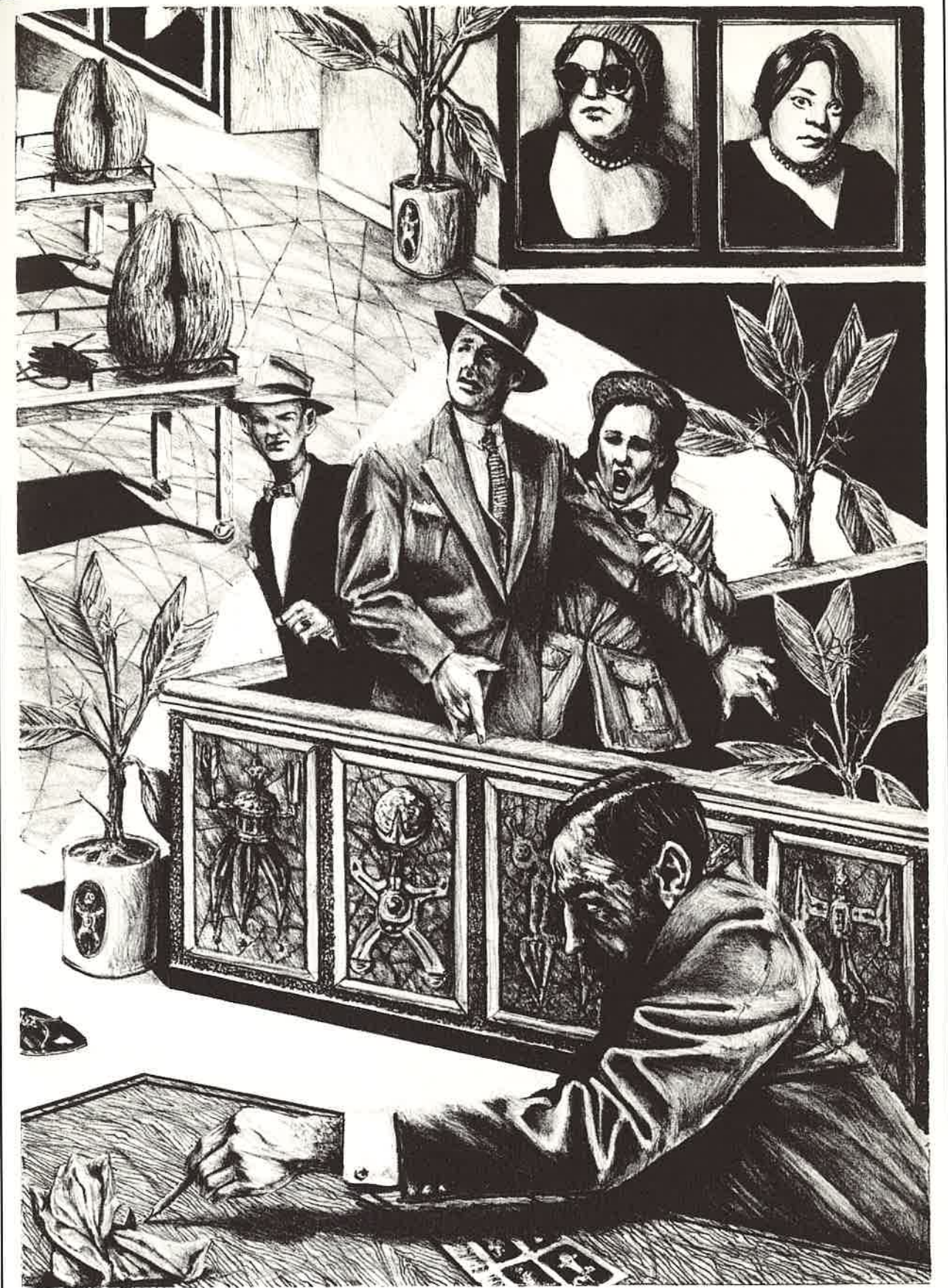
LODOICEA MALDIVICA — 1982

Lodoicea Maldivica is the name of a species of giant coconut. I presume it grows in the Maldivic Islands. I found a picture of it in a book called *Plants of the World*. I was looking at this picture of this giant coconut when my wife began talking about the little birds again. Why, I wanted to know, did the little birds keep coming up at all times in all contexts, ethical and otherwise. Because, she reasoned, they are *sly little devils*.

My wife never liked coconut. Even when she was pregnant. Even when she was dying. I am sure about this because the only thing she liked when she was dying was jello. I made her all the flavors and she seemed to have no favorite. It does seem a shame to have lived forty-three years never liking coconut and to die liking any and all flavors of jello, being as jello does not come in coconut flavor. But some shameful things can't be helped.

When asked why he didn't write a third movement to his last piano sonata, Beethoven is reported to have replied that he *didn't have time*. Most astute folks assume that this remark was an expression of impatient contempt for the question and questioner, but I am more astute than most and assume that he was telling the truth. Why?

Because there are times when a great deal of attention must be devoted to the little birds. This statement is sort of like a Zen koan in that it will submit to any amount of pondering without surrendering more than small tremors of its far-reaching resonance.



Lodovica Maldivica

Janell 1992

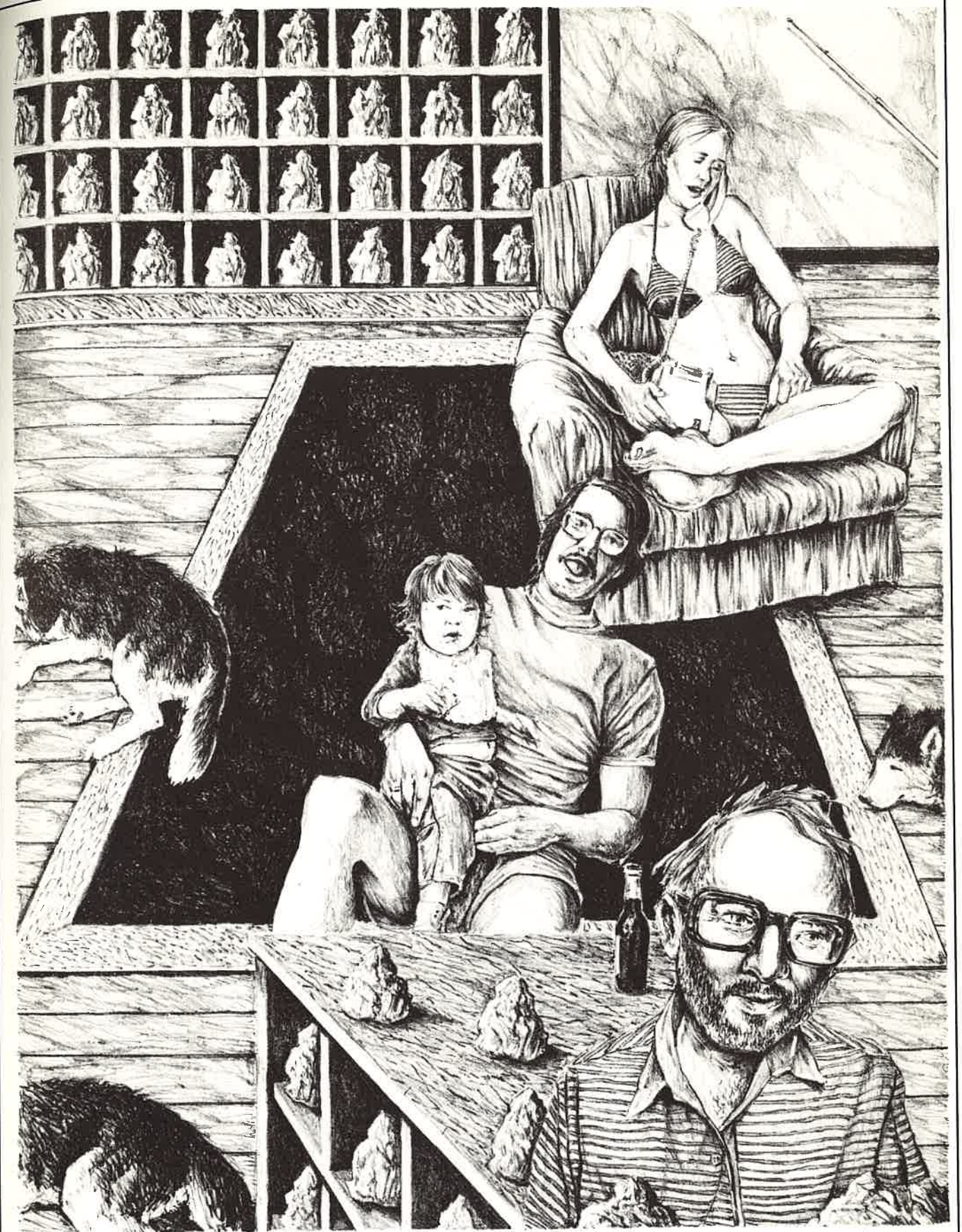
GOLD AVERAGES — 1982

My friend Ray is a congenital geologist, in that he seems to have always liked rocks better than any other manifestation of matter. He owns many. All different.

I decided to imagine him another collection of many rocks. All alike. Or at least as alike as imagination could muster. I think a collection like that would really be something. A true monument to the primal human urge to hoard things — a pure expression of it, so to speak, untainted by any of the trivial allurements of diversity and uniqueness.

But when I was through imagining this, it occurred to me that it would have been much better if I had imagined the rocks to be giant fossil coconuts — but then there wasn't enough time left and much of the space in the imagining had been filled up with dogs that couldn't be taken out.

Then the phone rang, and it turned out to be just one of the many people who wondered about my wife — one of those whose imaginings spun identical scenarios of hope, pity and torment, and it occurred to me that a collection of those imaginings would really be something. A true monument to the primal human urge to postpone the inevitable — a pure expression of it, if you will, undaunted by any of the dispassionate arguments of reason and necessity.



Gold Averages

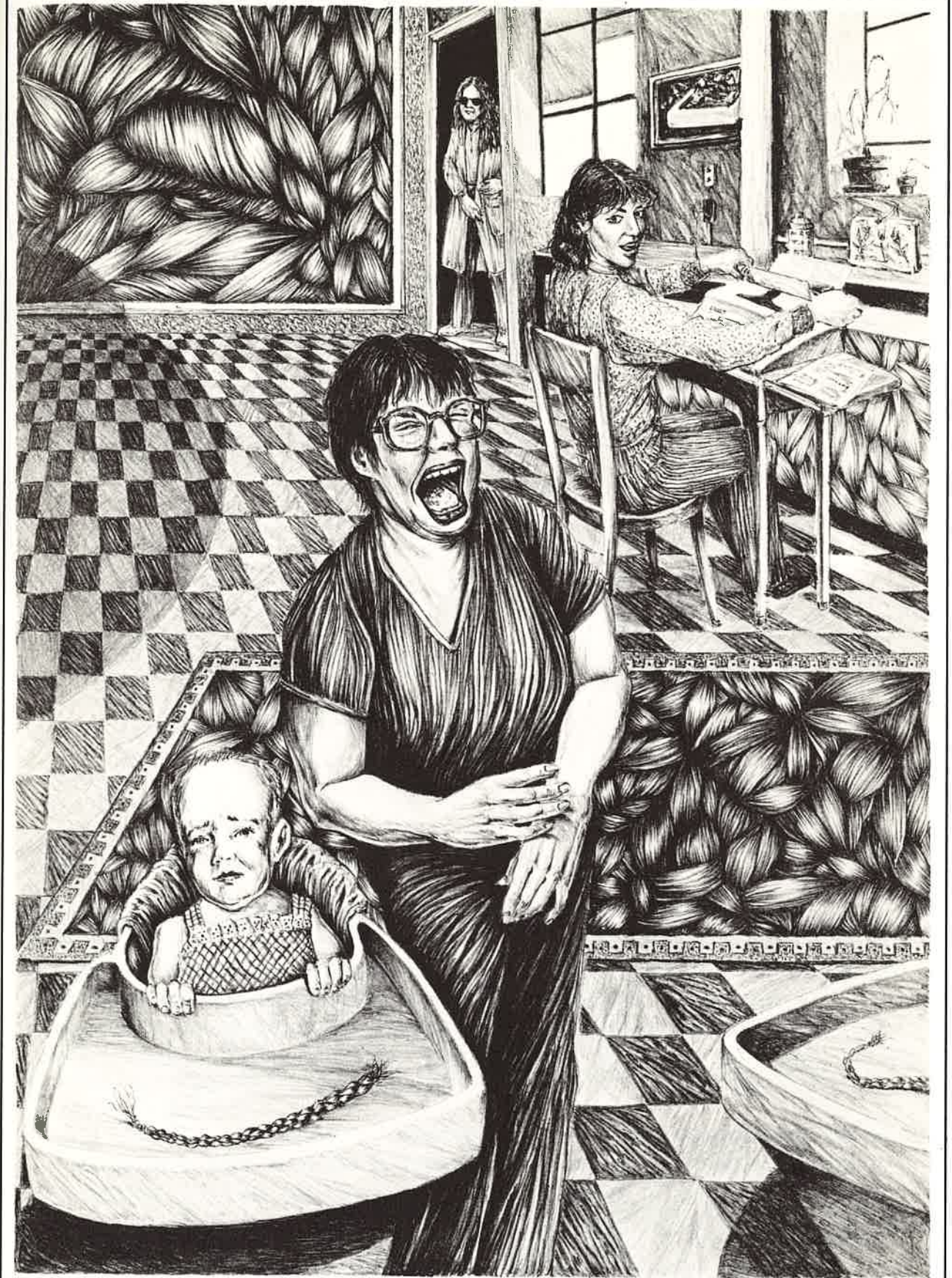
gomill 1992

UPBRAIDING BABY — 1982-84

In the first Polaroid I took, the baby came out smiling and was therefore unsuitable for my purposes. But the flash going off in the kid's eyes so thoroughly terrorized it that the next shot was perfect. Proving something. What?

I gave the smiling photograph to the mother, who, having no immediately apparent purposes, found it perfectly suitable. She lives in California and has named the baby "Season." I presumed that the second photograph contained the meaning, but I now realize that I was probably mistaken. The meaning may have been contained in the baby's fright and in its subsequent reactions to large men with cameras. And yet this, like everything, stands for something else. This is something that we are going to have to understand if we are going to get modern art straightened out.

Let's try concluding that the True Work of Art exists only in the response of the audience. That the real meaning of a Rembrandt self-portrait could be the consternation felt by the middleaged woman with the full bladder, standing on aching feet in the Frick Collection wondering why anyone would dress up so funny to paint themselves so ugly. Or as my wife put it, that the true content of *King Lear* is the first startled realization on the part of an adolescent watching her first play that actors spit when they talk loud.



Upbraiding Baby

Jonell 1982-4

AQUA FORTIS — 1982

When my wife was completely dead, I got a girlfriend who carried her own water with her in a thermos bottle. She would drink only one kind of water but would smoke any kind of dope. At first whenever she came to my house my son would make overt retching noises in her presence. We took this to be a sign of disapproval. She later gave up dope and took up weight-lifting and became the healthiest person in this book. My children learned to like her very much, for she was simple and guileless and would often very charmingly admit to being stumped by reality in general.

But I think she found me too negative. I'll give you an example. I put her in one of my drawings, and when she had pondered it she remarked that she found it very "phallic." Trying very hard to be genial, I pointed out to her that anything that is longer than it is wide can be considered phallic. This seemed to me to be an appropriately agreeable response, but evidently it can be construed as either a positive or negative attitude depending on how you choose to ponder it.

I should have just said yes. And the next time I'm in a similar circumstance I will.



Agua Fortis

Jonell 1982

UNSANITARY NAPKIN — 1982

Mary came into my studio carrying a wineglass and a cigarette. The cigarette was characteristic of Mary but the wineglass was not. She explained that it contained cranberry juice, not wine, and that she was fasting. I presumed that this little affectation of carrying her wineglass around with her made fasting somehow more tolerable, but like any of my presumptions, this could have been mistaken.

I think that being overweight is, in general, a good idea. It gives your self-image an unwavering focus and makes it possible to ignore all the things that are wrong with you that fasting won't fix. It's also a convenient device for detecting insensitivity in others so you can dismiss them with gravid contempt. I didn't always feel this way.

When my wife's stomach began to protrude, I became annoyed and told her to do something about it. Later we found out it was because her stomach muscles were compensating for the collapse of her spine, and were in fact the only thing holding her up. It's evidently very common in that method of dying.

I took two pictures of Mary and decided to draw them both, reasoning that the only reason she wasn't twins was — as in the case of any of us — a very small reason indeed. She has since changed her name to Rhea or Ria. I do not know which and I do not know why.



Unsanitary Napkin

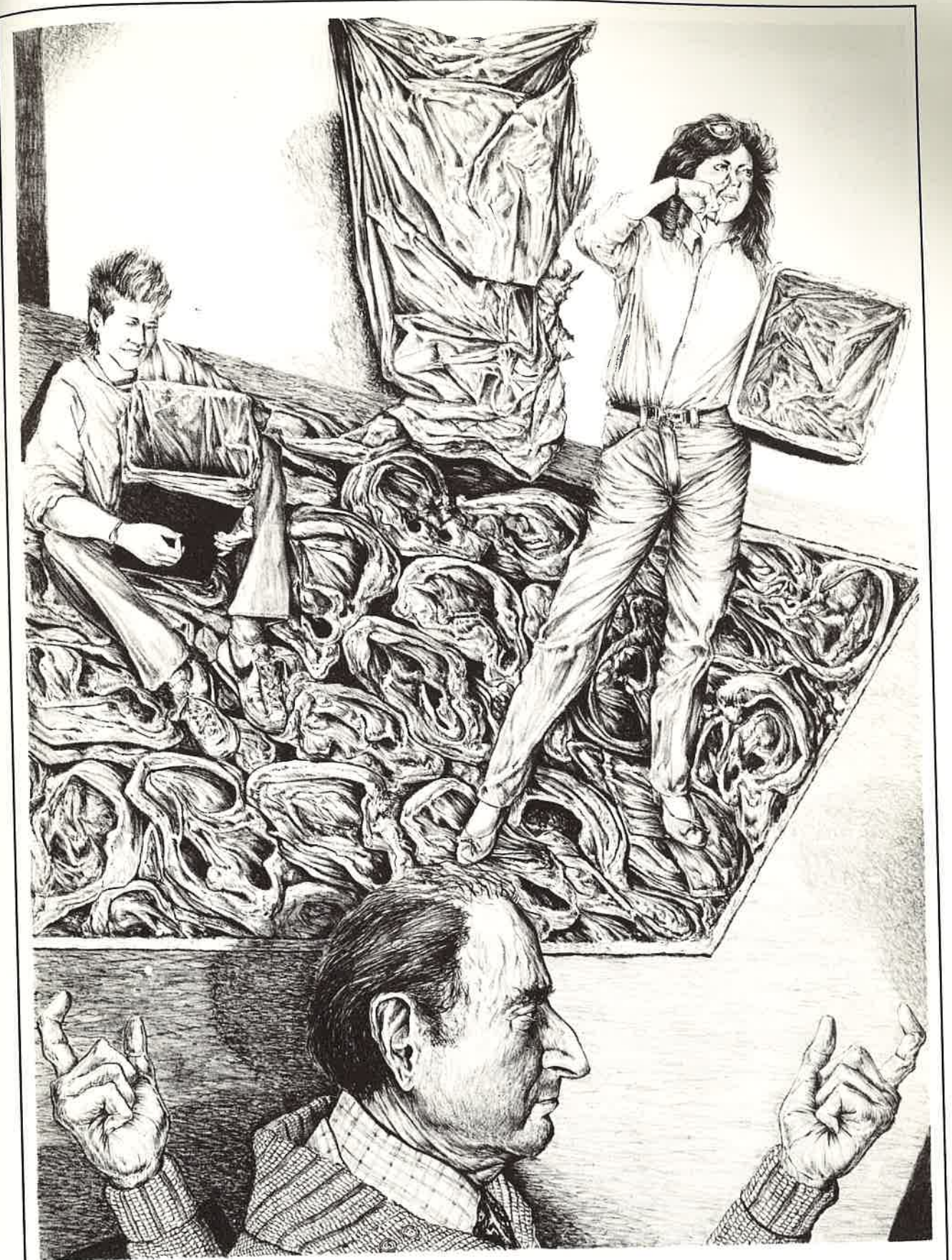
Gosnell 1982

THE IMPOTENCE OF SEETHING EAR NESTS — 1982

George, as far as I know, has no affection for and little interest in any sort of animal. It is therefore next to impossible to engage him in a meaningful dialog about Schipperkes. But this is what I was trying to do when I suddenly became fascinated by the convolutions of his ear. His ears are very prominent and intricately sculpted and in his old age will doubtless support rich growth of bristle.

Things that turn in on themselves — like snail shells or water down the drain — are very seductive. I suspect that when we die the sensation is very much like the nausea we feel when we spin around and get the liquid in our inner-ears rhythmically sloshing. When my wife was dying I intended to ask her what it felt like, but she was incoherent and I had to give her injections of morphine. I gave them to her in the sides of her thighs so I wouldn't have to roll her over. I had been worried about having to clean the sheets, but she went three days without peeing in the bed even once. It was the last and one of the most characteristic favors she ever did us, and when the men from the crematorium came, she was perfectly clean. All we had to do was take off her ring.

Unlike George, my wife's ears were not intricate and had been, I guess you could say, left unfinished. They had no ridges at their tops, but only smooth flat lobes. I've never seen any others like them. They made her somewhat self-conscious, and she always wore her hair in a fashion that concealed this anomaly.



The Importance of Seething For Nests

Gonnell 1982

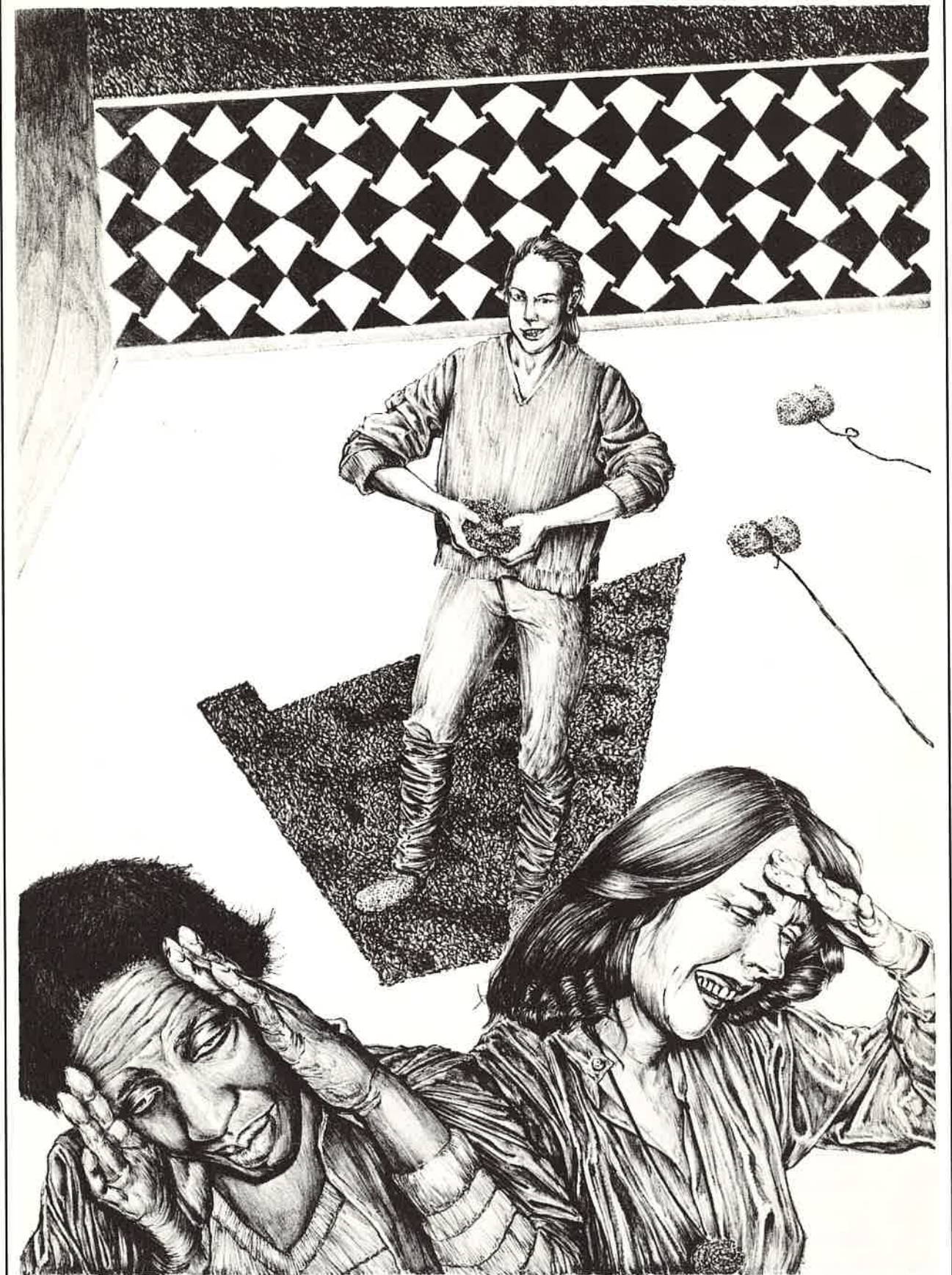
THE CONVERSION OF SANTA BARBARA — 1982

They put the Art Department cleaning ladies on the day shift to save money since the University is going broke. This means that they are always in the way. The one who cleans my studio is very familiar and likes to sweep her way into my studio to check out the work in progress. She has told me that she thinks I am a *real* artist because I can draw things real good. I am in perfect agreement with her.

She wanted me to draw her picture, so I put her in one of the lithographs and gave her one of the proofs. She wanted to know if she could have a nice frame to go with it.

Possessing none of it myself, I am very impressed by that sort of ingenuous initiative. If I had had just a small piece of it I could have turned my small talent into a ponderous reputation. She wanted to know how many girlfriends I had, and I said more than the strands in her mop, hoping to remind her of what Life expected of her. She often cautions me not to get married again, and seems to be in favor of casual sexuality. She invariably asks for a cigarette which I don't have.

She was not happy with the portrait I did of her, however, and wants me to do it over sometime when her hair is better.



The Conversion of Santa Barbara

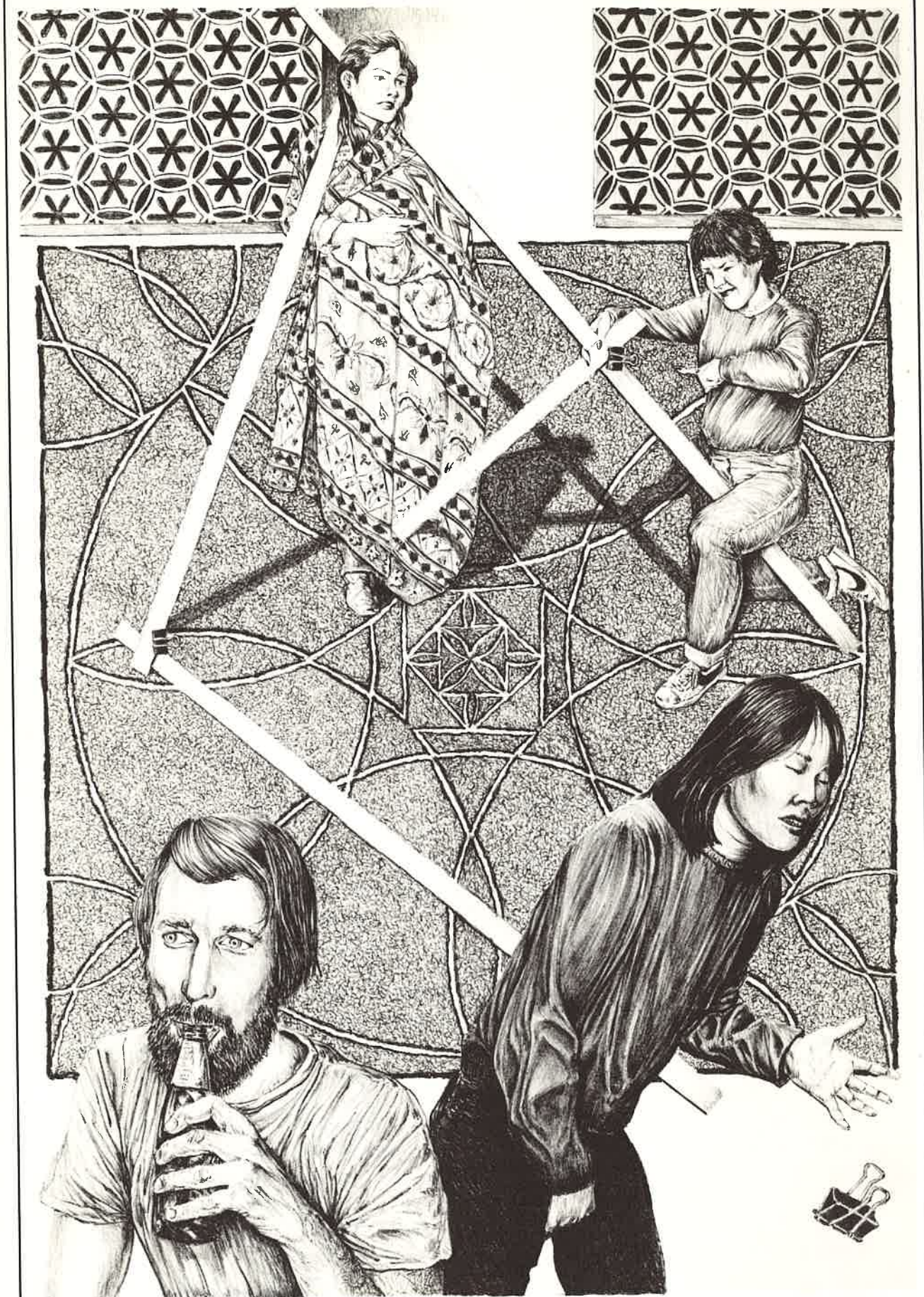
Gornall 1982

CLIP JOINTS — 1982

People and Things form very curious attachments. People and Things, in other words, are always getting stuck together, and I suppose the reason we seldom talk about it is because it is one of Life's most repulsive as well as most commonplace phenomena. I would like to think that I only become attached to Things involuntarily, and I offer as an example the sewing needle that got into my knee. It's true that during the anesthetized searching I felt a distinct sympathy for the needle and an equally distinct loathing for the doctors — but I would maintain that this was due to the fact that the needle hadn't exhibited gross indecision and ineptitude in its mission.

Sympathy, yes, I'll admit to that, but not the sort of symbiotic longing of my wife and the filing cabinet, the geologist and the rocks or the cleaning lady and the nice frame she didn't get from me. I am trying not to be critical — this is a dispassionate observation not an ethical judgement. There are intelligent people who believe that any ethical statement is no more or less than an attempt to persuade someone else to adopt one's own misconceptions. I'm not sure that this is true, and don't really care much whether it is or not, but it is one of the few philosophical stances that I have come across which have caused me extensive and enduring delight.

When I told this to my wife she was not delighted at all. She said that she realized that this could be true but she didn't really care whether it was or not and that if she went around believing or even just thinking about things like that, she'd be in the same hole that I was in, and she had no intention of ending up like that.



Chip Joints

Gonall 1982

LETTERS FROM HOME — 1983

My daughter was a foam failure. My son came to us courtesy of a faulty intrauterine device. When my wife was completely dead I got a girlfriend who took care of abused infants. Every evening she brought home their bruises and bleached them between her sheets. Her dreams were punctuated with cigarette burns, and she was on speaking terms with incest and murder. She went to the doctors and had her tubes tied, only to find out that I didn't intend to sleep with her anymore. Up till then she had thought I was just negative enough.

I have always reminded my children that they were not conceived intentionally, and this has done good things for their self-esteem. They began life as part of that small percentile that overcome great chemical and mechanical odds. Nothing seems impossible to them, and they regard my negativism — if you choose to call it that — as a cute eccentricity.

My girlfriend went to a bar and brought home a twenty-two-year-old. Later he called her and said that he wanted to send her some roses but he was afraid she wouldn't be home and they would freeze on her front porch. This gave her an idea: she stopped shaving her legs.

This is how she explained it. If your legs are hairy you can't jump into bed with men impulsively. From now on Romance for her will have to incorporate discretion, reflexion and a razor.



Letters From Home

Jonell 1982-3

SPRINGS ETERNAL — 1983

I don't know why, but I have a great fear of talking on the telephone. When my wife was not dead she did most of my telephone talking for me, but now I have to answer it when the children are not home.

A lady called me and wanted to sell me a funeral plot. I told her that I didn't think it was necessary. My wife got to be dead without one. The lady wanted to know what I had done with the ashes. I think she wanted to sell me something to put them in. It's possible that they have tiny burial plots for ashes. When I told her that I had scattered them on the grounds of the school where my wife had taught, the lady told me that was illegal. I asked her how she knew and she said that was what they told her to say in case it came up on the telephone. I asked her why she thought it was illegal and she said they told her because of disease. When I wanted to know what diseases could survive a trip through the crematorium, she said she didn't know but would check on it. I asked her to call me back. I rarely ask people to do that.

My son once told me that I shouldn't be afraid to call anyone: "Because you can just hang up if they get nasty and there's no way they can do nothing to you on the phone."

The cheerful banality and absolute certainty of his argument frightened me more than I'd ever been frightened — before or since.



Spring Eternel

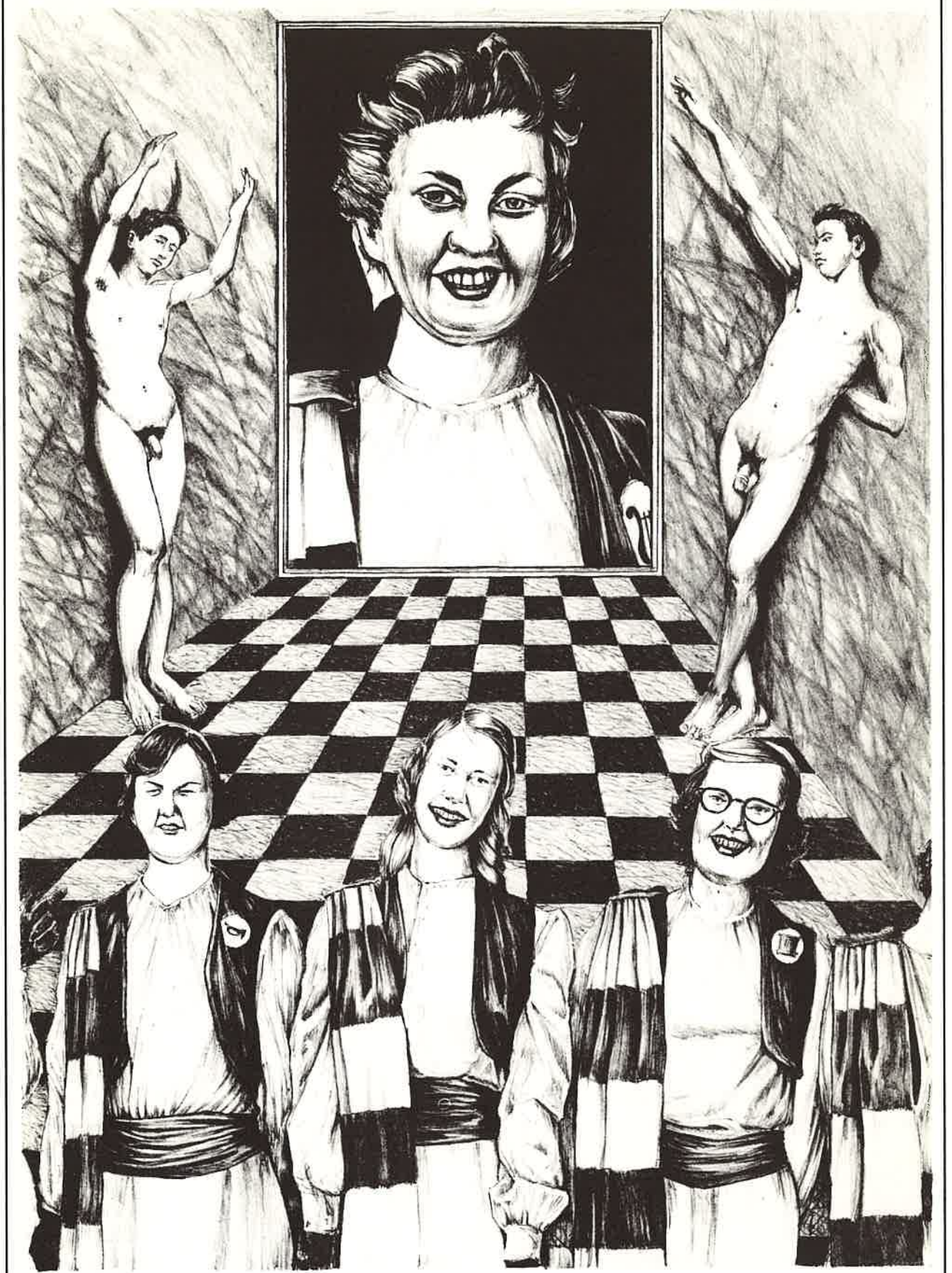
Gornell 1983

FEARLESS SYMMETRY (BOYS CAN'T HELP IT) — 1983

Every once in a while some woman will accuse me of expressing an overt misogyny in my work. It always surprises me that anyone would take the time. The last woman who did that was a student of mine, a divorced American Indian with a troublesome teenage son. She worked the late shift at a mental hospital. I had her over for dinner so she could talk to my girlfriend with the incurable disease. She came late and was very nervous, but we got her drunk and made her promise to call us if she got badly depressed. She killed herself in the spring, and I thought it was rather interesting when her ex-husband came by school to see if she had left anything in her locker.

I am in favor of the relinquishment of all economic and political power to women. As soon as possible. And specifically to those women who were members of my wife's 1956 high school drum and bugle corps: The San Jacinto High School Golden Gauchos. I have a panoramic photo of the whole group. It is a very sharply focused picture, and I have taken the time to examine each individual face with a magnifying glass. On the first row the baton-twirlers and lariat-loopers kneel in St. Augustine grass with leaves as precise as stigmata. In the upper right hand corner is a set of rather unattractive twins who appear to be either Jewish or Sicilian. Everyone smiles.

There are one hundred and thirty-six girls in the group, which is, I think, a number quite sufficient for handling the tiptop echelons of Government and Industry. I realize that some of them, like my wife, are already dead, but I am also confident that this number will be more than offset by those who were home sick, depressed or menstruating the day the photograph was snapped.



Fearless Symmetry (Boys Can't Help It)

Joanell 1993

FUN WITH FINGERS — 1983

I could live without the telephone, but I don't think I would want to live without pictures. I have spent a lot of my life looking at them. To the extent that I have understood anything, it has come from looking at representations of things and not at the things themselves. Things keep moving around and forming silly inexplicable attachments.

My present girlfriend is very young but she makes up for it by being very large and having a face just like a Raphael Madonna. She has never been anywhere. Being a perfect oval, her face is easy to draw. Raphael has never much impressed me, but I recently looked at the *Madonna del Granduca* so long that I finally understood what my wife meant by Mike and the Little Birds.

I took my girlfriend to the basement so I could take her picture so I could start trying to understand her. She is self-conscious about her size and won't wear certain kinds of clothes. There are some things she doesn't like to talk about. She is very clean. She has a sister who is a dancer who can eat a whole half-gallon of ice cream and throw it right up in the toilet.

My girlfriend was even more self-conscious in the basement, and I could tell that she wanted some thing to be attached to when she had her picture taken. So I looked around for some thing that was just as self-conscious and I finally decided on the chainsaw. I wrapped it in a towel to keep it from getting oil stains on the clothes she thinks make her look less large, and when I handed it to her she held it like it was a baby.



Fun With Fingers

Goodell 1993



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The suite of lithographs reproduced in this volume, *Modern Interiors*, was produced over a five-year period and intended to comprise a coherent but ambiguous narrative sequence. Included in this text are prose pieces which refer obliquely to each of the lithographs and simultaneously create a separate narrative loosely based upon events that took place in the artist's life while the series of lithographs was in process.



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